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Editorial Comment

MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

Edward A. Suchman, Professor of Sociology, presented at the University of Illinois a paper entitled "Man . . . Health Attitudes and Behavior." He pointed out that "man today may be viewed as the 'agent' of his own diseases . . . his state of health is determined more by what he does to himself than by what some outside germ or infectious agent does to him." Suchman contends that any change in longevity must now come through changing man's attitudes and behavior instead of protecting him against his environment. This concept is worthy of careful thought for it leads to the question, Is the proper study of man, man or his environment?

In the remediation of the disabled reader, can it be assumed that the individual is the "agent" of his own disability and that organismic and psychological factors are greater determiners of his maladjustment than factors in his environment from which he should be protected? Should teacher and psychologist focus their attention upon the individual, his goals, and his attitudes rather than upon where he lives and how much money he has to spend? Is it the individual or is it his culture which requires modification?

The individual, when adequately stimulated and "turned on," can, in spite of an unfortunate environment, learn to read and to achieve academically. Such individuals frequently hunger for knowledge and thirst for understanding. They, like Lincoln and many others, want to "amount to something." Their drive to achieve pays off in spite of poverty, and other detrimental and environmental conditions. Surely, whether blighted by birth or scarred by environment, the individual is the prime object of study. He must determine whether he will go the high road or the low road.

Homer L. J. Carter
Editor